Venture route, in which Airports Authority of India alongwith other Public Sector Undertaking of Government of India, will hold 26% equity. An Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM) has been constituted to take decisions regarding modalities, evaluation criteria etc. with regard to restructuring process of these airports.

Permission for foreign tourist charter flights

1392. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to allow foreign tourist charter flights on almost all the major airports;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what other steps are in the pipeline to attract more foreign tourists?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) As per the existing guidelines, besides the 12 international airports, tourist charter flights can also be operated to all airports having customs and immigration facilities.

(c) As in the past, an "open sky policy" has been declared for the period December, 2003 to February, 2004 to meet the extra demand during the peak tourist season, under which designated foreign carriers have been allowed to operate extra-bilateral flights subject to the terms of existing commercial agreements with designated Indian carriers.

Bangalore international airport project

1393. SHRI M V. RAJASEKHARAN:
SHRI JANARADHANA POOJARY:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the stage of progress on international airport at Devanahalli, Bangalore;

(b) by when the actual work of the airport will start;

(c) what is the original estimated cost of the airport project; and

(d) what is the present estimated cost of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) A joint venture company with a consortium led by M/s Siemens, Germany has been chosen as strategic Joint Venture partner. Joint Venture Company was incorporated in January 2001. Share Holder Agreement was signed on 23rd January Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) agreement has been frozen. Action is at an advanced stage for finalising concession Agreement, CNS/ATM Agreement, State Support Agreement and land lease Agreement. M/s. ICICI have been appointed as financial arranger.

(b) Financial close is expected to be achieved by the end of December, 2003. The actual construction will commence immediately after the Financial Close. The target opening date for the airport is 33 months from the date of Financial Close.

(c) The original estimated cost of the airport project was $230 million (Rs. 1150 Crores).

(d) The present estimated cost of the project is Rs. 1330 crores approximately.

Purchase of smaller aircrafts by AI

1394. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Air India decided to buy smaller aircrafts, especially 146 seaters, a class of air craft in tune with Indian Airlines requirements;

(b) if so, the details including number and the total amount proposed to spent for the purchase;

(c) whether the decision to buy smaller aircrafts will result in the competition with Indian Airlines in the light of the "open sky policy"; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) The Board of Directors of Air India in its meeting held on 8.11.2003 approved the proposal for acquisition of 10 medium capacity long-range (A340-300) and 18 small